

ARTICLE APPEARED  
IN PAGE B4

NEW YORK TIMES  
12 December 1984

# Crile Testifies on Program's Accuracy

By M. A. FARBER

George Crile, the producer of a disputed CBS documentary on Vietnam, vigorously defended its accuracy in court yesterday as lawyers for Gen. William C. Westmoreland continued their 10-week assault on the broadcast.

Mr. Crile — in his third day of testimony at the trial of General Westmoreland's \$120 million libel suit against the network in Federal District Court in Manhattan before Judge Pierre N. Leval — made no concessions to arguments by the general's lawyer that the 1982 CBS Reports documentary was seriously flawed.

"You deliberately tried to mislead the viewer, didn't you, Mr. Crile?" Dan M. Burt, General Westmoreland's lawyer, asked with regard to statements on the broadcast by Col. Gains Hawkins, a former intelligence analyst.

The producer, unwavering, said: "I believe very strongly that that was an absolutely accurate presentation of Colonel Hawkins's views."

In a portion of an interview with Colonel Hawkins that was shown on the program, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception," the colonel appeared to be saying that enemy strength estimates proposed by General Westmoreland's command in Vietnam in 1967 were worthless.

Colonel Hawkins also said on the air that he had not concealed his view in

1967 from Samuel A. Adams, who was then an analyst for the Central Intelligence Agency and, having served as a consultant to CBS for its documentary 15 years later, is now a defendant in this case.

"There was never any reluctance on my part to tell Sam or anybody else who had a need to know that these figures were crap, they were history, they weren't worth anything," Colonel Hawkins said.

But, yesterday, Mr. Burt drew on the unedited transcript of the Hawkins interview with Mr. Crile in 1981 and read aloud a phrase that immediately preceded the segment that was broadcast.

It said: "Now prior to this when we had the old figures that we inherited from the South Vietnamese forces..."

Mr. Burt suggested that Colonel Hawkins was really talking about figures that predated the ones advanced by General Westmoreland's officers in 1967 and that CBS, in its editing, had distorted the colonel's meaning.

Mr. Crile, he said, had made it appear that the new figures, not the old ones, were being referred to as being without validity.

"That's correct, and that is the case," Mr. Crile replied.

The 39-year-old producer — who has repeatedly been accused by Mr. Burt of misrepresenting General Westmore-

land's positions — went on to say that Mr. Burt should consider the entirety of Colonel Hawkins's interview, other parts of which were broadcast.

"You can't take this answer outside the totality of Colonel Hawkins's response," he said.

General Westmoreland, who was commander of American forces in Vietnam from 1964 to 1968, contends in his suit that CBS defamed him by saying he had deceived President Lyndon B. Johnson and the Joint Chiefs of Staff about the size and nature of North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces in the year before the 1968 Tet offensive.

The documentary — which was based heavily on what Mr. Crile has called Mr. Adams's "exhaustive research" over the years — charged a "conspiracy" by General Westmoreland's command to "suppress and alter critical intelligence on the enemy."

The purpose of the "conspiracy," it said, was to make it appear that the United States and its allies were winning a "war of attrition." Its result, according to the broadcast, was to leave Washington "totally unprepared" for the scope of the Tet attack.

Mr. Crile is also a defendant at the trial, as is Mike Wallace, the narrator of the documentary.

Colonel Hawkins, who now operates a retirement home in Mississippi, is expected to support Mr. Crile's testimony when he takes the stand as a witness for the network.

In Saigon in 1967, the colonel was in charge of developing the official listing of enemy strength known as the order of battle. During most of his tour in Vietnam, he worked for Maj. Gen. Joseph A. McChristian, who was General Westmoreland's chief of intelligence from 1965 to June 1, 1967.

In the spring of 1967, Colonel Hawkins and his colleagues produced new — and higher — estimates for the Vietcong's part-time, hamlet-based self-defense forces. Whereas those units had previously been thought to number about 70,000, they were subsequently considered to total 117,000.

After General Westmoreland learned of the new figures, he ordered the self-defense forces deleted from the order of battle. Those units, he has testified, posed no significant military threat. He said their inclusion in the order of battle at a higher figure in 1967 would have "misled" the press into thinking that the overall size of the enemy's "real fighters" had grown markedly.

CBS, both in its documentary and now at trial, argued that the general's decision was "politically" motivated, contravened the "best intelligence" available to him and was simply intended to keep the figures for enemy strength artificially low.

In any event, Colonel Hawkins was among General Westmoreland's representatives at a conference at Central Intelligence Agency headquarters in Langley, Va., in August 1967 to iron out differences over strength figures for the self-defense and other forces. At that conference, Mr. Adams opposed the removal of the self-defense forces and favored a total figure for Commu-

nist strength that was nearly twice that sanctioned by General Westmoreland.

Yesterday, Mr. Burt took issue with a statement on the CBS broadcast that General Westmoreland had adopted a "new tactic" by deleting the self-defense forces, and showed Mr. Crile a cable sent by the C.I.A. in Saigon to C.I.A. headquarters on April 1, 1967.

The three-page cable, a page of which has been missing in recent years, indicated that the Defense Intelligence Agency, the intelligence arm of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, planned to recommend that only guerrillas be counted as part of the enemy's "military force figure" for "irregulars."

Louis Sandine, a C.I.A. representative, said in the cable that he found the D.I.A.'s reasoning "persuasive."

But Mr. Crile testified that, on the basis of his interviews with General McChristian in 1981 and conversations with him since the suit was filed, he was unaware of any formal move by the D.I.A. along these lines.

General McChristian, he recalled, said the D.I.A. was "completely satisfied" with the figures developed by Colonel Hawkins.

"There was no such proposal as you are saying," Mr. Crile told Mr. Burt.

Using copies of Mr. Adams's notes from 1967, Mr. Burt also attempted to demonstrate that General Westmoreland had not secreted the higher figures for the self-defense forces.

Those figures, he suggested to Mr. Crile, had been shown by Colonel Hawkins in a series of Vugraphs that were screened at the conference at C.I.A. headquarters, attended by intelligence analysts from a variety of agencies.

But what was important, Mr. Crile insisted, were the figures General Westmoreland would accept. And those, he stressed time and again, did not include self-defense forces.